

REMARKS

Claims 1-17 had been presented. By this amendment, claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11 have been amended, and claims 18-20 have been added. Reconsideration is requested.

The examiner had withdrawn the prior grounds for rejection and entered a new ground of rejection. In the previous final office action, claims 1-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,052,723 to Ginn (hereinafter "Ginn") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,370,355 to Ceretta, *et al.* ("Ceretta"). The examiner cited Ginn for most of the claim elements, and Ceretta for sending follow-up messages.

Ginn relates to a method for aggregating control on an electronic network, and includes discussion of propagating messages. The use of the phrase "propagating messages" might suggest that what is happening is rather similar. In fact, the discussion at col. 8, line 49 to col. 9, line 41 indicates a different type of system. In "Example 1," at col. 8, lines 51-64, participants listen to a famous person speak, and different people propose questions. These questions are ranked by other users, and the highest ranked questions can then be proposed. These questions thus are not provided to the participants to solicit an answer, but to solicit a ranking. In "Example 2," beginning at col. 8, line 66, there is an example of 100 participants doing an exercise in pairs, and the session leader monitors different conversations to determine which should be played for the other participants. Again, in this case the participants are not provided with a question that solicits an answer and then receives from these participants a first round answer in response to the question.

In addition, Applicants disagree that Ginn teaches or suggests automatically forwarding to the participants' group an answer by the participant to a first-round question. Specifically, Ginn does not propose or indicate "for one or more of the sending participants, automatically sending the received first-round message to one or more other participants with whom the sending participant is grouped," as recited in claim 1.

The examiner cites item 78, Fig. 11 and col. 9, lines 10-12 of Ginn as teaching this element. In fact, lines 10-12, which constitute part of the description of Fig. 11, teach that, "The leader can then review the 3 conversations in storage, choose one, and play this conversation for the 90 participants." When a 'leader,' meaning a person, personally reviews several responses, selects one, and then manually plays this response to a group, this cannot be considered "automatically sending the received first-round answer" as claimed. Similarly, item 78, Fig. 11

contains the caption: "Based Upon Examination, Update Switches and Send Messages to Users." Here, Ginn again fails to teach "automatically sending"; instead, in item 78 Ginn describes manually sending messages, based upon examination by a human moderator.

Rather than organizing a dialogue by dividing participants into groups and circulating participants' messages within the group automatically, Ginn seeks to manually adjudge the best response made by any participant, and after determining which response is the best, to manually send that message to all participants.

Claims 8-12 were deemed to be system claims similar to claims 1-7, and the examiner treated them as such. As with claim 1, Ginn does not teach or suggest the providing of questions that solicit answers and automatic sending of the answers to others in a group.

Ceretta is not cited for these features, and is not believed to disclose them.

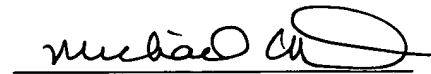
None of the art cited by the examiner teaches or suggests the limitation in question, and accordingly the combination does not contain all of the elements of the claimed invention. Consequently, there is no prima facie case of obviousness.

If this response does not put this application in condition for allowance, the examiner is urged to contact Applicants' attorneys at the telephone number listed below.

For at least the reasons stated above, claims 1-17 are allowable and a notice of allowance is requested.

Please apply any debits or credits relating to this matter to Deposit Account No. 08-0219, and consider this a request for any extension that may be due.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael A. Diener", is written over a horizontal line.

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